

A Group of Roman Pottery from Fengate

by John Hayes

The aim of this article is to provide a fixed point for Nene Valley pottery of the mid second century A.D. — the period of emergence of the classic 'Castor' colour-coated ware.

The deposit described here comes from one of a complex of Roman farm ditches on the eastern part of the Fengate site, excavated in Summer 1977 (code FNG 77 F 412). It was concentrated within a 6-7m stretch and sealed by the clay capping common to all the main Roman ditches on the site (fig 5, A). Rich organic remains (in process of study) and a considerable amount of brick and tile (some 7.575kg) from a building as yet unlocated accompanied the pottery. The ditch cut an earlier ditch belonging to the Roman farm (F 65) and in part followed the line of, and overlapped, a Late Iron-Age ditch connected with the earlier village on the same site.

The pottery evidence — there are no associated coins — indicates a rather brief period of existence for the farm as a whole around A.D. 120-150/160. The deposit in ditch F 412 should, on both stratigraphical and stylistic criteria, be late in the sequence, and may well belong to the final destruction or abandonment, to judge by the building debris in it. The pottery comprises a broad range of wares from samian to coarse calcite-gritted; the total weight is c.24.675 kg ($\pm 2-3\%$). Many of the vessels are restorable, and should therefore not be residual. The best-preserved examples of each ware are shown in fig 6, and are listed below. A date close to A.D. 150 may be suggested for them and for the date of deposition. A number of similarities may be seen with the Sulehay kiln-group published in *Durobrivae* 3, 1975, 16-18, but the Fengate group may be slightly later. The pattern of wares is quite different from that found in the early second-century dump from Monument 97 (*Durobrivae* 3, 1975, 26f.). Nene Valley grey ware of the classic second to fourth-century variety is the commonest present. Almost all the coarse wares should be from local sources.

Catalogue

(Numbers refer to fig 6)

1. (Not drawn) Samian dish, form 18/31, Lezoux ware, stamped PINNAE M. Near-complete; rivet-holes from ancient repair. (Samian ware comprises 2.59% of the total deposit by weight.)
- 2-5., 7., 9-10. Jars and dish in Nene Valley grey ware. Steel-grey (core off-white), with horizontal polishing-marks (see 2) and burnished patterns. No. 4 is misfired buff to brownish-grey. (This ware: 35.125% of total by weight.)
6. Jar in smooth light-grey ware (core darker); rivet-holes. (A variant of the preceding ware; 2.45% by weight.)
8. Dish, imitating Samian form 36, in grey to black ware (some sand, mica) with sandwich firing; parts burnt.
- 12-13. Jar fragments in creamy-white ware, slightly sandy; carbon remains on outsides.
14. Lid, ware as no. 8, fired light red (grey tint at core); carbon round edge.
15. Sherds of an early Nene Valley mortarium. Ware as no. 12, more sandy; red-brown grits.
16. Flagon neck in soft yellow-buff version of ware of no. 12. (All white-buff local wares; 5.47% by weight.)
17. Jar(?) rim in rough reddish calcite-gritted ware, unevenly fired. (31.07% by weight.)
- 18-20. Cooking-pot, lid and casserole, in hard thinnish calcite-gritted ware, dark grey-black with brownish areas on outside. (10.95% by weight.)
- 21-22. Sherds of colour-coated beakers; light red clay, reddish slip (local ware). No slip on base of no. 22.
- 23-26. Colour-coated dishes (24-25 are sherds); slightly sandy white ware (as 12-13) with dark slip. (Colour-coated wares: 3.21% by weight.)

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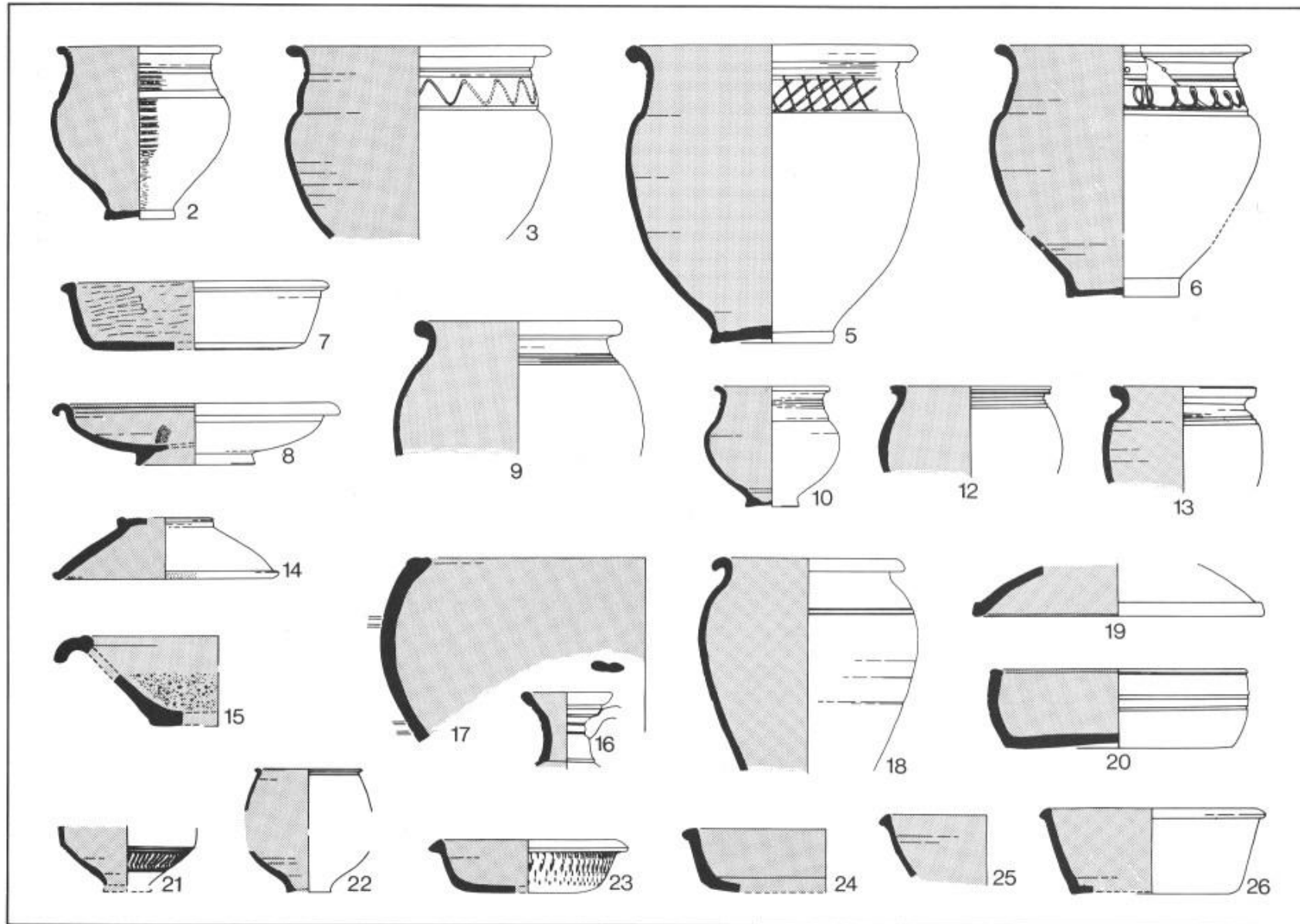


Fig 6 A mid second-century group of Roman pots from Fengate (selected vessels)